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ABSTRACT

One of a series of pre-apprenticeship training modules, this self-paced student training module deals with writing resumes. Included in the module are the following: cover sheet listing module title, goals, and performance indicators; introduction; study guide/check list with directions for module completion; information sheet discussing the function of resumes, sample resumes, resume structure, and resume composition; self-assessment; and post assessment. Emphasis of the module is on providing an understanding of the function and importance of a personal resume and on being able to identify, analyze, and communicate personal skills and experience in writing. (Other related pre-apprenticeship phase 1 training modules are available separately--see note.) (MN)

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ED217266

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING SYSTEMS

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP
PHASE 1 TRAINING

FINDING A JOB
RESUMES

CE032902

## Goal:

The student will know the function and importance of a good resume, and be able to identify, analyze and communicate in writing his or her skills and experience.

## Performance Indicators:

The student will demonstrate understanding of the function and importance of a personal resume by written practice in analyzing his or her skills and in making a first draft resume.

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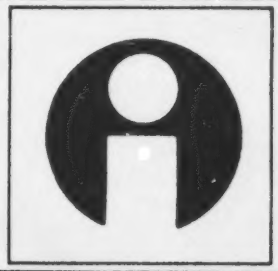
# Study Guide



Put a check mark next to each step as you complete it.

1. ____ Read the Information section.

2. ____ Complete the Self Assessment and show your instructor what you have written.

3. ____ Re-read the Information section.

4. ____ Complete the Post Assessment and hand in what you have written to your instructor before continuing to the next module.

# Information

An advertising copywriter uses his or her skill with written language to highlight all the best things about a product, to make it stand out compared to others, to attract you and possibly to persuade you to buy it. This is exactly the same purpose of a person writing a resume; it is an advertisement and you are the product. Nowadays it is a buyer's market as far as getting a good job is concerned and the employer is the buyer, so, your sales publicity had better be top quality.

A resume is very different from an application form. The resume is like an advertisement for something delicious to eat and the list of ingredients, required by law, on the side of the package, is the application form. One of them is intended to attract and sell and the other gives required information in a dull list. So, you can compare yourself not only to a product but with something delicious to eat. However, the proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating, both the advertisement (your resume) and the list of ingredients (your application form) describe the same food (the same you), but it is only possible to prove what it's like after tasting (having an interview) and then trying it to see if you really like it (being hired on a trial basis).

A resume is a summary of your strengths and relevant skills that makes you sound as good as you are at your very best. There is nothing untruthful about a resume; it tells the truth even if it doesn't tell the <u>whole</u> truth. It can be used in many different ways. Here are a few suggestions:

1. given to influential people who might help you
2. handed to an employer you have asked for job information
3. sent by mail to the employer after an information seeking visit
4. sent out, with a cover letter, in response to a known job opening
5. mailed, with a cover letter, to a person you would like to work for
6. attached to an application form
7. handed over at a screening interview
8. handed over at a hiring interview

It is a flexible document in its use. It is also a very personal document. It should not be mailed off in hundreds to anonymous organizations hoping you'll get a bite. Very few people even land interviews by this approach. The resume, if it is well written and you are proud of it, should be given the best chance of being read; this will be determined by you--what contacts you have, who you have visited, what leads you hear of, etc.

It is important to distinguish a personal resume from an application form, in more detail.

| An application form | Your resume |
|---|---|
| impersonal and formal | individual and personal style |
| standard, unattractive, undistinguished | well-organized, readable, attractive layout and paper |
| asks all applicants exactly the same questions | is unique and can stand out from everyone else's |
| you give your experience in the way dictated by the form | you give your experience in any way <u>you</u> choose |
| you have little choice over what information is included | you can choose what to include and what to leave out |
| you must answer every question with nothing but the truth | you tell the truth, but present yourself positively at all times |
| has a fixed amount of space for each item | can be used flexibly; you can expand one section and decrease another, in any way you want |
| requires full dates, including months | supplies dates when they are to your advantage |
| demands full details of school and qualifications | offers as many or as few details as you choose to give |

In summary:

| | |
|---|---|
| An application form is almost entirely <u>out of your control</u> | a resume is totally <u>within your control</u> |

Here are some examples taken from real resumes. Each extract is from a different resume and they are all written by people with very little paid work experience.

<u>Resume A</u>. Written by an 18-year old capitalizing on voluntary work done within the family.

*Working from an early age in the family construction business, I have been involved in most stages of housebuilding: preparing foundations, laying concrete, building frames, hanging sheetrock, basic plumbing,

electrical work, roofing and painting. I have lifted and loaded heavy materials and safely used a wide range of hand and power tools (including nail guns, power saws, etc.)

Resume B. This describes work mainly done in spare time, combined with one temporary job that lasted two months.

*Four years of hands-on experience with cars, vans and trucks--rebuilding engines, following through on major and minor mechanical repairs and producing high quality body work (removing dents, painting and lettering). I am at present customizing a van.

Resume C. Another 18-year-old who did this work on personal equipment.

*Ability to install stereo systems in cars and households; wiring, checking, making adjustments, using small hand tools.

Resume D. Written by someone who had never done any paid work.

*Planning and cultivating a large vegetable garden--using hand and power tools and knowing how to plant correctly, store and preserve produce, inspect for changes and maintain high quality.

Resume E. This person had no professional work experience but drew on skills used for several years.

*Working with a wide variety of animals, from dairy cows to parakeets. This requires reliability, sensitivity, the ability to recognize even small changes in condition and to cope with emergencies.

Resume F. This experience was gained at age 16 while missing classes at school.

*Cutting, transporting and selling firewood; using power saws, showing business initiative and the ability to sell.

Resume G. Describes summer vacation work.

*Seasonal worker with _____ Parks and Community Gardens; keeping public areas and amenities clean, well maintained and ready for use.

Resume H. Work done in the evenings.

*Over two years, while at school, at _____ Ice Cream Parlor, this required high-energy and enthusiasm to maintain fast, efficient service in a continuous party atmosphere.

Resume I. This describes spare time work on own and family vehicles while at school.

*Free-lance auto mechanic work; I have done everything from regular vehicle maintenance through to complete engine rebuilds.

Resume J. A summer vacation job.

*With _____ taking inventory of auto parts and materials, all-round servicing of automobiles, in addition to installing and maintaining shop front landscaping.

Resume K. Helping father.

*Assisted a journeyman painter during three years; preparing, painting and finishing interior and exterior surfaces.

Resume L. An 18-year old's three-month job.

*Service Station Attendant - doing minor repair work (installing shocks, mufflers, windshields, headlamps, etc.), fueling, lubricating, changing oil and filters, also having responsibility for cash register and record keeping.

All the above are extracts only taken from one or two-page resumes. They were chosen to show how to present your experience. All the extracts are based on verifiable facts, but the experience has been written up in an attractive manner and dates and other details that might not help are left out. What is essential is that you can stand by what you have written. If you write, as part of your skills, "maintaining and repairing cars and following written instructions for the installation of major parts," you had better be able to do just that. This does not describe a mechanic, but it does make claims about mechanical aptitude and experience.

The form of a resume also varies, although it is preferable to keep it to one or two sides of a page in order to increase to chances that a possible employer reads it all. It also includes some basic information. A suggested format is on the next page.

Name
Address
Telephone

Position Desired _____

Education and Training

*H.S. diploma at _____ with special interest in _____
*Any other

Relevant Work Experience

*Give a name to the work, then describe the responsibilities, the activites involved and the skills you used. Make it sound impressive.
*
*

Other Relevant Experience

*
*

Personal

*Personal and interpersonal skills important in a work context, plus any relevant interests.

References - Available on request.

Let's go through again with some extra details.

1. Your name stands out better in capitals and in the center of the page.

2. Position Desired. It is far better if you know what you are looking for so that your resume can support your search. Before working on your resume, you should have reached some tentative ideas about the job or type of work you would like. Once you have done this it is a good idea to write down on a separate piece of paper the requirements of that job and then to supply from your background experience as many of the relevant skills as you can find. If

you do not know what sort of work you are looking for, a resume is not going to be very effective as a selling aid or tool.

3. Education. This heading can come either before or after your work experience. It should present your achievements and any interests that are relevant to the type of work you are seeking. Include any useful Community Education classes you have attended.

4. Relevant Work Experience. This could have many different headings, such as part-time and summer work, professional experience, etc. It is written in this way so that you can include paid and unpaid, full-time and part-time, permanent and temporary work under the same heading. It is probably to your advantage to leave out dates or length of time at each job unless it was during summer vacation or lasted at least a year. It is possible to acquire a lot of valuable experience during two months on a job but it is not the best selling line to write this on a resume; most employers are prejudiced in favor of longer stays in jobs. (You will have to write accurate dates on the application form.)

5. Other Relevant Experience. This is where you can be creative and include anything that in your opinion is relevant, such as winning awards, being a member of a sports team, collecting for charity, or any skills that you have acquired or practiced, such as working on a car, repairing equipment, helping build something, etc. The experience could even have been in your childhood. The only important guideline is whether you could demonstrate your skill now after a short time for brushing up on it.

6. Personal. This is where you put any personal skills that you have that indicate you will have appropriate work habits and attitudes. This is also where you list hobbies and activites that show you are an interesting person and potentially a good, reliable worker.

7. References. You do not have to put the names of people as long as you do spend some time in getting references written. If you want a good reference, it is not enough to leave it up to your reference person however much you impressed him or her; people who are useful for references are usually very busy and probably do not remember all the things that are important to include.

The best approach is to make a list of all the things you think you have achieved, all the duties and responsibilites you have undertaken, and all the skills you have learned and practiced. It is like making, in note form, a mini-resume. You then take this to your employer, supervisor, teacher, counselor or whoever it is you have chosen and say: "I know you are very busy but could you possibly find time to write an open reference for me? I have written down a few things that I think I have done. Would you look them over and see if you agree; I'll leave the list with you."

It is almost certain that the person you ask will be delighted that you have taken so much trouble; you have made his or her task much easier. It is difficult writing a reference for somebody! Even if he or she prefers to write a reference to be seen only by your prospective employer, the notes you have given will still supply the details and probably the tone of what he or she writes or says over the phone. References must be gathered and influenced by you <u>before</u> you leave where you are working, training or assisting.

The basis of any resume is the communication of your skills; we will spend more time here explaining how you can identify them.

First of all, you have <u>personal and interpersonal</u> skills. There are thousands of words in the English language that are used to describe people and their personalities. Below are twenty single words or short phrases that could describe an individual. How many of those describe you?

| I am | I am |
|---|---|
| enthusiastic | helpful |
| honest | cooperative |
| dependable | tactful |
| hardworking | sociable |
| practical | friendly |
| a good learner | tolerant |
| able to show initiative | able to take criticism |
| self-confident | able to give praise |
| positive | polite |
| intelligent | loyal |
| etc., etc. | etc., etc. |

The list on the left could describe you as you are, even without people, and the list on the right is almost totally about your interactions with others.

If you decided that you were all or many of these, you have no need to read this paragraph. If you would like to recognize yourself in more of these descriptions, try putting a different phrase in front of them.

I can be, I could be, I have been

| | |
|---|---|
| enthusiastic | helpful |
| honest | cooperative |
| etc., etc. | etc., etc. |

Do you increase your score by doing this? You should. What the change of phrase does is show that these so called "character traits" are nothing fixed. All of these descriptions represent skills that we all have practiced or have the potential to use in different situations. You could explore this further by writing:

I am able to be enthusiastic when.....

If you go through the two lists in this way, you will probably discover that you have a lot more personal and interpersonal skills than you at first realized--and the skills listed here are important in developing appropriate work habits and attitudes. If you are skilled in these areas, there will be plenty of jobs opening for you. In your resume you can write these skills anywhere that is relevant in the experience section or in the personal details. You would also include any that you have regularly demonstrated in the list that you give to the person writing a reference for you.

Next, let's look at the skills you have acquired in work and other activities that are helpful in different job contexts. Most people are surprised just how much is involved in doing any activity. It is usual for people to dismiss something they can do by saying, "that's easy, it's nothing." In order to make the most of our skills and abilities we need to look again at what we can do and to decide what someone who had never done what we find easy would have to be able to do in order to avoid making mistakes. Take, as an example, a hobby such as collecting stamps; many people have done this at some time in their lives. Let's look at the things that could go wrong and the skills you would need to avoid that happening.

| <u>What could go wrong?</u> | <u>The skills needed to avoid that happening.</u> |
|---|---|
| You could damage the stamps by heavy handling or poor storage. | Finger dexterity<br>Organizing ability<br>Being neat and tidy |

| | |
|---|---|
| You could overlap or misalign stamps on the page | sense of design<br>being meticulous |
| You could stick in stamps that still have paper on or you might rip them off the envelope rather than soaking them. | patience, persistance, thoroughness,<br>the ability to maintain high standards |
| You could put stamps in the wrong country classification | organization<br>good reading<br>ability to search for information<br>information<br>attentiveness to small detail |

So, already, a person who has enjoyed collecting stamps even for a relatively brief period in his or her life, has practiced many different skills which can be applied in a work context. It is very likely that these skills have already been used in different situations; the only problem is identifying and communicating them. It is worth the effort.

Here is another example. A person who enjoys garden work but thinks it is all straight forward and easy, needs to look at one tiny activity, such as preparing for and planting seeds.

He or she has:

*been able to make decisions (about purchasing, selecting and placing)
*practiced planning (what to plant and when, according to seasonal requirements and controlled harvesting)
*followed written instructions (on seed packages)
*organized (the best layout of crops and paths)
*paid attention to close detail (planting tiny seeds in the right place)
*used his or her hands and body in physical labor
*used tools and equipment correctly and safely

And that only includes the planting of the seeds! All of us have many more skills than we think. Also, each activity or job we have done has many different skills that are just as important in other jobs. These are the details that you should write in your resume under work experience.

Writing a winning resume is not easy and, although you can do it yourself, it is wise to get help and advice on the proof reading, editing and layout, after you have written out the details. When someone whose judgement you trust has seen the

rough draft, get it typed perfectly on an electric typewriter; it is better to pay someone to do it than to have a poorly typed resume. Then, take it to a copy shop and have it photocopied on colored paper--earth or atmosphere tones. For about a dollar you will have ten impressive advertisements of yourself. Keep the white original safe in case you want more copies later.

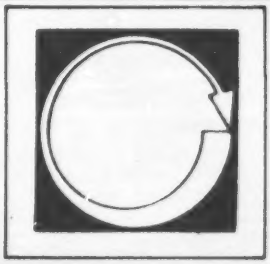
The first test of a resume is your own response. Is it interesting? Does reading it make you feel good about yourself? If it doesn't, you need a new resume! The life of a resume is short; you need a new one as soon as you've got a job.

In summary: your resume is a positive statement of belief in yourself based on your life experience. It should make you feel good about yourself and create enough interest in an employer that he or she wants to know more about you.

A brief final section about cover letters. If you do send a resume through the mail you need an accompanying cover letter. It is very simple, on one page and has three short paragraphs.

| | |
|---|---|
| Dear _____ | (address a person. Make one telephone call and find out his or her name before you write.) |
| Paragragh one. | Explain why you have chosen them. This is an opportunity to say something you know and like about the company or business. |
| Paragraph two. | Explain why they might be interested in you. Refer to your resume and indicate important skills or experience that you think are most relevant to the company's or employer's needs. |
| Paragraph three. | Ask for an interview. Suggest times when you are available. |

# Self Assessment



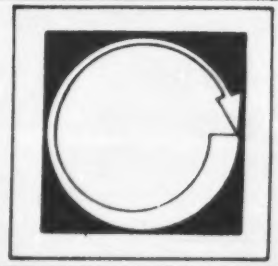
When you have completed the following assignments, show them to your instructor.

1. How would you describe the person you can be in different situations with different people? Make a list of at least twelve personal and interpersonal skills that you have. Refer back to those given in the Information section, but try to come up with some new ones as well.

2. Now take the six which seem most important in a job context. Write an example for each, describing where you have used these skills.

3. Write down three examples of any sort of work you have done and then, with a partner, write out the different activities you did and what tools and equipment you used.

# • Post Assessment



1. Take a large sheet of newsprint or butcher paper and put your name in the center. Use the whole paper surrounding your name (do not make lists) and jot down all the work (paid or unpaid) you have ever done. Next, with a partner, interview each other and try to write down all the activities and duties and skills that each work situation involved. Put down all the tools and equipment used. Add dates and length of time for each work experience.

2. You are now ready to try your hand at writing a first resume. Put your name and address at the top and then follow the outline given below.

Position Desired

Education
*

Work Experience
*
*
*

Other Relevant Experience
*
*
*

Personal
*

References

(Use one page but make as many entries as you like under each heading.)